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ABSTRACT

A study of the needs and services available to parents of exceptional children in Southern California is described. The first section reviews results of a mail survey in which 78% of the agencies and programs serving exceptional persons indicated they also provided some type of service to parents. Additional results discussed include that the most mentioned targets of parent services were the parents of mildly handicapped persons, and there was a lack of parent involvement in planning and conducting services. A needs assessment involving 50 parents of mildly and 50 parents of severely handicapped persons is described in the second section. Among the results reported are that the classroom teacher was the primary source of information regarding the children's problems, parental involvement in organizations beyond PTA was limited, and parents of severely handicapped children appeared more involved than parents of mildly handicapped children in their child's education. A section on interpretation of the data considers the importance of a method for informing parents about available services. (CL)

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EXCEPTIONAL PARENTS

A Survey of Programs, Services and Needs

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Foreword

The study reported herein is part of a program of research currently being conducted in the School of Education at the University of California, Riverside. The focus of this research is on the needs of parents of exceptional individuals. Majority of the research in this report was supported by a grant from the California State Department of Education (Grant #75-36). Results of this study are the sole responsibility of the investigators. Official endorsement of the California State Department of Education or the University of California, Riverside is not implied.

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Overview of the Project

During recent years, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of parents becoming involved in the special education process (Clements and Alexander, 1975). Parents have been instrumental in the development of programs and services for exceptional individuals, both at the local school district level, and at the State and National levels. Parent organizations have grown in number and in size. Probably the area in which parents have had the most impact is in the area of legislation. Parents have worked for equal educational opportunity for all handicapped children, regardless of the severity of the handicap. They have also worked for the mildly handicapped children's right of due process under the law. In California, a parent organization for neurologically handicapped children (California Association for Neurologically Handicapped Children) was influential in the passage of legislation mandating a program for Educationally Handicapped minors. Parents want what is best for their children, and their activities, of late, reflect this desire. They also want services and programs for themselves. They too have certain needs as "exceptional parents." It is apparent that special education should include more than just services for exceptional children; special education should also recognize the needs and concerns of exceptional parents.

Parents of exceptional individuals may face a number of difficult problems. The list might include: inability to receive a reasonable and understandable diagnosis; lack of information as to services available to the child and the family; and, psychological and emotional problems related

to guilt, feelings of inferiority, and financial difficulties. Clements and Alexander note that "perhaps one of the most tragic times in the life of the parent of the exceptional child is the initial hunt for information" (p. 3). They refer to this as the "shopping parent" process. In the past, services to help parents overcome these problems and concerns have been delivered on an informal and irregular basis by special education teachers, administrators and school psychologists. In a survey of 29 school districts in California, Keogh, Becker, Kukic and Kukic (1972) found that 2/3 of the districts surveyed offered some programs to parents, but these were limited to group meetings where parents discussed their problems.

Services for parents of exceptional individuals need to be examined and modified to meet the needs of the parents. Literature on the specific needs of parents is limited. The purpose of this project is twofold.

1. To identify programs and services presently available to parents of exceptional individuals in Southern California.
2. To identify the needs of parents of exceptional individuals in Southern California.

This report is divided into three major sections. The first part includes the results of a mail survey conducted in Southern California of programs and services available to exceptional parents. The second part includes the results of a needs assessment interview conducted with 100 parents of exceptional individuals. In the last part of the report, data from both studies are interpreted and recommendations for the development of parent programs and services are discussed.

PART I

Survey of Programs and Services Available to Parents of Exceptional Individuals

Method

Selection of Sample

Six types of facilities, agencies or school programs serving exceptional individuals in Southern California were asked to participate in the survey. These included school districts, preschools, hospitals and clinics, associations (e.g., Easter Seal Society), Regional Centers, and sheltered workshops (e.g., Goodwill). A form letter and questionnaire were sent to each potential participant. A follow-up letter was sent one month later. The number of questionnaires sent and the number returned completed is summarized in Table 1. The average response rate was 70%.

Table 1

Questionnaire Response Rate

Type	Number Sent	Number Completed	Response Rate
School Districts	144	103	72%
Preschools	24	9	38%
Hospitals and Clinics	22	18	82%
Associations	22	13	60%
Regional Centers	12	11	92%
Sheltered Workshops	21	16	76%

Questionnaire

A short questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed by project

staff. The questionnaire focused on programs and services offered by project participants to parents of exceptional individuals. Questions included: who is responsible for parent programs; how often do these services occur; what is the focus of such activities; and, what is their perceived effectiveness. Responses from individual facilities, agencies and school programs were summarized in a Community Resource Handbook (Becker, Bender and Kawabe, 1976) that was disseminated throughout Southern California.

Results of Survey

Of the 170 participants in this survey who serve exceptional individuals, 78% (n = 132) indicated that they also provide some type of program or service to parents. The percentage for each category of participants is summarized in Table 2. Participants noted that such services and programs were geared toward parents of children with specific handicapping conditions. Percentages of "exceptional parents" served for each type of "child exceptionality" were computed. Those exceptionalities mentioned by at least 1/3 of the participants are also listed in Table 2. These data suggest that there are a relatively high percentage of agencies, facilities and school programs serving parents of exceptional individuals. However, the type of exceptional parent served is somewhat restricted to the educable mentally retarded (EMR), the trainable mentally retarded (TMR) and the educationally handicapped (EH). Sheltered workshops, associations, regional centers, and hospitals and clinics primarily serve parents of the more

Table 2

Percent of Project Participants

Serving Parents of Exceptional

Individuals

Type	Number Responding	Number Serving Parents	Percent Serving Parents	Exceptionalities Served
School Districts	103	83	81%	EMR, EH, TMR
Preschools	9	8	89%	Speech
Hospitals & Clinics	18	12	67%	EMR, TMR, EH, OH, VH, AH
Associations	13	11	85%	TMR
Regional Centers	11	6	55%	EMR, TMR, OH
Sheltered Workships	16	12	75%	EMR, TMR

severely handicapped, e.g., mentally retarded, orthopedically handicapped (OH), visually handicapped (VH) and auditory handicapped (AH), while school districts serve parents of both mildly and severely handicapped children. In general, programs and services offered to parents vary with children's exceptionalities.

A number of questions in the survey focused on the nature and extent of the parent programs and services. Two general types of services were described by participants--group meetings and individualized services. Evaluative comments were also obtained.

Group Meetings

The purpose of the group meetings varied with the type of facility, agency or school program surveyed. For the most part, group activities focused on the dissemination of information to parents through lectures and films, and the discussion of feelings and concerns about their children. The content of group meetings is summarized in Table 3. Percentages were fairly consistent across the variety of facilities and agencies surveyed. Meetings were reported to take place "monthly" or "occasionally." Fifty-four percent of the school districts responding noted meetings to be as infrequent as monthly. Regional Centers reported such meetings to be more frequent than once a month. Persons in charge of meetings are listed in Table 4. Group meetings conducted by school districts were most frequently the responsibility of special education teachers and school psychologists. Parental involvement at the supervisory level was limited.

Individualized Services

Each of the facilities, agencies or school programs serving exceptional individuals and their parents also noted providing individualized services, such as counseling, referral assistance, home visits and the like. The emphasis of these personal services is listed in Table 5. Percentages were consistent for all six types of project participants. Persons in charge of providing these services are listed in Table 6. Participants noted that parents seeking services on an individualized basis contacted the facilities or agencies themselves, e.g., on a self-referral basis. Media was also noted to be an effective referral source.

Table 3

Content of Group Meetings

for Parents[1]

Type	Content of Meetings				
	Films	Demonstration	Speaker/ Lecture	Rap Session	No Response
School Districts (n = 83)	41%	52%	51%	51%	14%
Preschools (n = 8)	38%	63%	75%	75%	13%
Hospitals & Clinics (n = 12)	58%	50%	58%	75%	25%
Associations (n = 11)	36%	36%	36%	27%	36%
Regional Centers (n = 6)	83%	67%	67%	67%	0%
Sheltered Workshops (n = 12)	17%	17%	33%	33%	8%

[1]Percentages for Table 3 and subsequent tables in Part I are based upon the number of facilities, agencies and school programs that indicated service to exceptional parents (see Table 2). In some cases, more than one response was listed, thus percentages may total more than 100%.

Table 4

Person in Charge of

Group Meetings

Type	Person in Charge					
	Special Teacher	School Psychologist	Counselor	Administrator	M.D.	Parent
School Districts (n = 83)	54%	51%	16%	46%	18%	17%
Preschools (n = 8)	38%	50%	13%	13%	13%	25%
Hospitals and Clinics (n = 12)	25%	25%	25%	25%	33%	67%
Associations (n = 11)	27%	18%	18%	27%	18%	27%
Regional Centers (n = 6)	0%	0%	67%	33%	50%	0%
Sheltered Workshops (n = 12)	17%	8%	33%	8%	8%	0%

Evaluation of Programs and Services

Participants were asked several questions regarding the perceived effectiveness of the parent programs and services. In response to the question of program effectiveness, participants noted that programs and services were generally beneficial, in that they provided parents with material and background information on their child's problem. They also reported that these activities helped to get parents involved and interested in their child's education. Feedback from parents is sum-

Table 5
Services Rendered to Parents
on an Individualized Basis

Type	Services Rendered		
	Counseling	Home Visits	Referral Assistance
School Districts (n = 83)	64%	59%	66%
Preschools (n = 8)	38%	13%	63%
Hospitals & Clinics (n = 12)	92%	50%	83%
Associations (n = 11)	64%	45%	55%
Regional Centers (n = 6)	100%	100%	100%
Sheltered Workshops (n = 12)	50%	42%	50%

Table 6
Person in Charge of
Individualized Services

	Person in Charge					
	Special Teacher	School Psychologist	Counselor	Administrator	M.D.	Parent
School Districts (n = 83)	60%	65%	34%	52%	11%	8%
Preschools (n = 8)	13%	38%	38%	25%	13%	13%
Hospitals & Clinics (n = 12)	33%	33%	33%	33%	50%	25%
Associations (n = 11)	0%	9%	18%	27%	0%	9%
Regional Centers (n = 6)	17%	17%	83%	67%	83%	33%
Sheltered Workshops (n = 12)	25%	17%	33%	17%	8%	8%

marized in Table 7. Feedback, generally, was mixed. A large percentage indicated that they had no feedback from parents.

Table 7

Feedback From Parents

Type	Feedback			
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No Feedback
School Districts (n = 83)	43%	6%	11%	40%
Preschools (n = 8)	50%	25%	0%	25%
Hospitals & Clinics (n = 12)	42%	8%	17%	33%
Associations (n = 11)	27%	0%	9%	64%
Regional Centers (n = 6)	33%	0%	33%	34%
Sheltered Workshops (n = 12)	33%	0%	25%	42%

Summary of Results

Results of the survey discussed in Part I are summarized as follows:

1. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the facilities, agencies and school programs surveyed in this project who serve exceptional individuals indicated that they also provide some services and programs for exceptional parents.
2. The target audience for these services and programs is, for the most part, parents of mildly handicapped individuals.
3. Respondents unanimously agreed that parent education plays a significant role in any intervention for exceptional children.
4. Services and programs consisted of group meetings and individualized activities. Group meetings usually involved lectures, films, demonstrations and rap sessions. These group activities were primarily the responsibility of special education teachers and school psychologists. Services offered on an individualized basis consisted of counseling, home visits and assistance in making referrals, and were the responsibility of teachers and administrators.
5. There appears to be a lack of parental involvement in the planning and supervision of these programs and services.
6. Group meetings were held no more than once a month.
7. Respondents felt that their programs and services were beneficial to the parents they served. Parents, however, had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the parent education programs.

PART II

Needs Assessment of Parents of Exceptional Individuals

Method

Selection of Sample

Parents of individuals with mild and severe handicapping conditions were asked to participate in the needs assessment. Fifty parents of mildly handicapped individuals (i.e., EH and EMR) were interviewed by project staff, as well as 50 parents of severely handicapped individuals (i.e., TMR, OH, AH and VH). Parent names were obtained from school districts and county school offices in Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange County areas. School administrators wrote parents of exceptional individuals in their area and asked for volunteers to participate in the needs assessment being conducted by the project staff at the University of California, Riverside. Interested parents contacted the school administrator who in turn released the name and telephone number of the parent to the project staff. Each parent was telephoned to set up an appointment for an interview. A difference was noted in the cooperation rate between parents in the mild group (56%) and parents in the severe group (85%).

Characteristics of Sample

For reporting purposes, parents were divided into two categories on the basis of their child's exceptionality, mild and severe. Fifty interviews were conducted with parents in each group. Types of exceptionalities represented in the mild and severe group by educational level are summarized in Table 8. Several parents interviewed had more than one exceptional child, thus the numbers reported for each group in Table 8 are greater than 50. A large percentage of the mild sample were parents

Table 8

Child Exceptionalities and Educational Levels Represented in Interview Sample

Exceptionalities	Number Representing Each Age Group		
	Preschool	Elementary	Secondary
Mild			
Educationally Handicapped (EH)	1	14	25
Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR)	0	2	12
Severe			
Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) and Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)	2	16	14
Visually Handicapped (VH)	0	5	1
Auditorily Handicapped (AH)	6	12	0

of elementary and secondary age EH children, while the severe sample included a variety of exceptionalities. In the severe group an equal number of boys and girls were represented, while boys outnumbered girls 3:1 in the mild group. These differences in distribution of sex are generally representative of mild and severe incidence figures in the total school age population.

In almost every case, mothers were interviewed by project staff. This was not intentional. During the 100 interviews, only 21 fathers were present. All but two of the parents interviewed spoke English. Majority of parents interviewed were the natural parents of the exceptional children, and most parents were married and living together. Over half of the interview sample

was in the 31-40 age bracket, and most had completed high school and had some college education. Mothers, for the most part, were homemakers and fathers were professional types and blue collar workers. In the severe group, 22% of the parents (n = 11) indicated that they had more than one exceptional child, while 14% (n = 7) responded similarly for the mild group.

Needs Assessment Interview

Parents were interviewed in their home by a trained interviewer from the University of California, Riverside. These persons were two male and two female graduate students in Special Education. Interview sessions ranged from thirty minutes to one hour. In most cases, only the mothers were present for the interview.

The needs assessment schedule was developed by project staff with the help of six consultants. Two of these consultants were parents of exceptional individuals. A copy of the interview schedule may be found in Appendix B. The interview schedule was organized into two parts, background information and needs assessment. The background information was completed by each parent prior to the needs assessment, and consisted of questions about the child, parents and family structure. The needs assessment was composed of four categories of questions focusing on the school system, outside agencies, child and parents.

Results of Needs Assessment

Results are organized into two major sections. The first section focuses on the school system and outside agencies utilized by parents. The second section comprises the needs assessment of parents. On all tables, percentages are based on 50 interviews.

Information About the School and Outside Agencies

Parents were asked several questions regarding their feelings about the school system. Responses for the two groups (mild and severe) are summarized in Table 9. Parents were evenly divided in their feelings about the school system. Approximately half of the 100 parents interviewed felt their child's needs were being met. They were particularly concerned with the quality of

Table 9

Questions Regarding the School System

Questions and Responses	Mild (n = 50)	Severe (n = 50)
Are the child's needs being met?		
Yes.	50%	60%
No.	50%	40%
What are your concerns?		
Poor teachers.	52%	40%
Poor communication with parents.	34%	30%
Not helping child to achieve potential.	34%	22%
None.	32%	28%
What are the strong points?		
Special curriculum and materials.	74%	54%
Assist in developing social skills.	12%	30%
Communication with parents.	26%	40%
Developing child's talents.	14%	26%
None.	32%	16%

the teachers and the communication between school and home. In regard to the strengths of the school program, parents were generally impressed with the special materials and curriculum used in special education. Responses were generally similar for both the mild and severe groups.

A number of parents indicated that they utilize services for their child above and beyond those offered by the school system. Fifty-eight percent of the parents in the severe group and 32% in the mild group noted that their children receive additional services. Most parents stated that they did not pay for these services. Services ranged from psychological testing and counseling to remedial tutoring. Many of the parents in the severe group utilized these services for medical reasons. Parents were very positive about the help they received for their child from these outside agencies.

Needs Assessment

Parents' sources of information. One of the major concerns of the parents interviewed in the study was the lack of information available to them regarding their child's problem. They had many questions, but found it difficult to find answers. Parents were asked a number of questions regarding the dissemination of information. Their responses are summarized in Table 10. When asked if the parents felt they needed more information about their child and what they could do at home, over 50% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Parents of children with mild handicaps more often said "yes" than did parents of children with severe handicaps. Negative responses, in some cases, represented apathy and disillusionment based on previous failures to obtain information. Parents noted that the most frequent and most helpful source of information was the child's

Table 10

Sources of Information

Questions and Responses	Mild (n = 50)	Severe (n = 50)
If you have a question, what do you do first to get an answer?		
Consult child's teacher.	58%	54%
Consult medical doctor.	14%	22%
Consult specialists (i.e., psychologist)	32%	20%
No where to go.	24%	0%
What ways are helpful in answering your questions?		
Special education teachers.	50%	44%
Medical doctors.	87%	22%
Friends.	10%	10%
Outside agencies.	27%	20%
Own research.	4%	18%
Specialists.	18%	24%
None.	30%	14%
Do you need more information about your child's problems and more direction on what to do at home?		
Yes.	64%	44%
No.	36%	56%

special education teacher. Medical doctors, personal friends and specialists were also utilized to answer questions. Twenty-four percent of the parents

in the mild sample stated that they had no one to turn to for information. A large percentage of the respondents concluded that no one was helpful in answering their questions. In general, parents of children with mild handicaps seemed to have more unanswered questions and fewer people to go to for help. Eighteen percent of the parents in the severe category relied upon their own research skills to find the answers to questions.

Methods for disseminating information. Parents were asked several questions regarding methods for disseminating information and answering their questions. Responses are listed in Table 11. Reading material and the media received mixed reviews from parents. Popular books like How to Teach Your Baby to Read by Glen Doman or Why Your Child is Hyperactive by Benjamin Feingold are utilized by parents to answer specific questions. Television programs concerned with exceptional individuals were also noted to be helpful. Of interest, Exceptional Parent, a bi-monthly publication by parents and for parents was not well known among the persons interviewed. Several people knew that it existed, but only one or two subscribed. Parents listed a number of ways to disseminate information. Percentages were consistent for both mild and severe groups. The list included books, magazines, films, lectures, conferences, counseling sessions, home visits and workshops. Several parents suggested a monthly newsletter focusing on recent developments.

Present level of parental involvement. Parents were asked to describe their present level of involvement in programs or services specifically geared toward parents of exceptional children. There responses are summarized in Table 12. parents appeared to be unaware of any services or programs available to them. Ninety-six percent of the parents in the mild group did not know of any programs or services available to them through the school

Table 11

Methods for Disseminating Information

Questions and Responses	Mild (n = 50)	Severe (n = 50)
Have you found any reading materials particularly helpful?		
Yes.	32%	50%
No.	68%	50%
Are you aware of the magazine called Exceptional Parent?		
Yes.	4%	30%
No.	96%	70%
Do you find the media helpful?		
Yes.	44%	40%
No.	56%	60%
How would you like information to be disseminated?		
Books.	42%	30%
Magazines.	30%	20%
Films.	24%	32%
Lectures.	30%	24%
Conferences.	36%	34%
Counseling sessions.	46%	32%
Home visits.	26%	34%
Workshops.	42%	40%

Table 12

Present Level of Parental Involvement

Questions and Responses	Mild (n = 50)	Severe (n = 50)
Are you aware of any programs or services made available to parents by the local school district?		
Yes.	4%	36%
No.	96%	64%
Are you aware of any programs or services made available to parents by outside agencies?		
Yes.	4%	16%
No.	28%	42%
Not Applicable.	68%	42%
Do you belong to any parent groups or organizations?		
Yes.	22%	32%
No.	78%	68%
Do you do any volunteer work with exceptional children?		
Yes.	4%	30%
No.	96%	70%

system. Parental involvement in volunteer work or in parent organizations was also limited.

Guidelines for parent programs. Parents were asked to suggest some guidelines for developing programs and services for parents. Responses are listed in Table 13. Parents suggested a number of programs and services that should be made available by the school system. These include counsel-

Table 13

Suggested Guidelines for Parent Programs

Questions and Responses	Mild (n = 50)	Severe (n = 50)
What additional programs and services should be provided by the school district for parents?		
Teach parents to teach through workshops and conferences.	70%	56%
Provide readily available information about the child's problem.	64%	58%
Counseling.	40%	50%
Make services of specialists available.	20%	42%
Development of better home-school communication system.	32%	38%
Respite care.	0%	14%
None.	24%	20%
If programs were developed for parents, would you participate?		
Yes.	62%	54%
No.	8%	6%
No Response.	30%	40%

ing for parents, providing information, training parents to work with their children, and the like. When asked if they would participate in a program for parents that incorporated their suggested guidelines, the majority said "yes"; however, a number of parents did not respond.

Summary of Results

Results of the 100 interviews reported in Part II are summarized as follows:

1. The primary source of information regarding children's problems is the classroom teacher. Parents most often turn to teachers first if they have a question. Teachers were also noted to be the most helpful in answering questions. Medical doctors and specialists, for the most part, were characterized as being evasive and not helpful. A majority of parents felt that they needed more information about their child's problem and what they could do at home with the child.
2. Approximately one-fourth of the parents of children with mild handicaps felt they had no one to turn to for answers to their questions.
3. Parents reported that the media and reading materials were somewhat helpful in answering their questions. Popular books and educational television programs were mentioned as sources of information for parents.
4. Parents were, for the most part, unaware of the magazine, Exceptional Parent. Only a few parents were subscribers.
5. Parents were generally aware of programs or services made available to them by the school system or outside agencies. Ninety-six percent of the parents of children with mild handicaps did not know of any programs or services for parents offered by the school system.

6. Parental involvement in organizations other than the PTA was limited. Volunteer activities were restricted to parents in the severe group.
7. Parents suggested a number of guidelines for the development of parent programs and services which included teaching parents to teach their own children at home, providing material to answer parents' questions, and offering counseling sessions. A wide variety of presentation formats were also noted.
8. Approximately one-half of the parents said they would participate in a parent education program. A significant number did not express interest in such a program.
9. Differences were noted between parents in the mild and severe groups. Parents of severely handicapped children were more eager to participate in this project and appeared to be more involved in the education of their children. Responses to questions, however, were similar in most cases for both groups.
10. Parents generally reported feelings of frustration and intimidation. Many had attempted to obtain information and services, but were not successful.
11. Specific needs and concerns of parents varied with the exceptionality and age of the child. For example, parents of visually handicapped children were the least concerned about their child's problem and were surprised they were included in the project. Parents of the auditorily handicapped wanted classes in sign language, while parents of educationally handicapped individuals wanted to know what they could do at home to help their child. Parents of train-

able mentally retarded individuals were quite negative about the information they were receiving from medical doctors. They wanted someone to help them interpret the medical data.

PART III

Interpretation of Data and Recommendations

Results of the 100 interviews conducted with parents of exceptional individuals may be interpreted to indicate that parents are interested in the well-being of their children and want to be involved in the educational process. Generally speaking, they want information on the child's problem and what to do about it at home, as well as counseling services for themselves to help them deal with their feelings about the child. The means to obtain these services or information, however, is not clear to the parents. Teachers, for the most part, have provided useful information, and specialists have been used for counseling. Books and media have also been utilized. Parents still feel that their questions have gone unanswered and they do not know what to do or with whom they should consult. They feel frustrated by repeated failure to get answers to their questions. This may be the reason why some parents felt nothing would help them and that they would not participate in a program designed for parents.

Results of the mail survey of facilities, agencies and school programs reported in Part I paint a somewhat different picture of the situation. School districts, for example, reported that they offer a wide variety of programs and services for parents of mildly handicapped children, yet only two of the fifty parents interviewed in this category were aware of such activities for parents. There appears to be a good match between what is offered by facilities, agencies and schools and what parents feel they need. Counseling sessions, workshops and lectures are available, yet parents who want such services, report that they are unaware of their existance.

Based upon the data reported in Parts I and II it may be concluded that what is lacking in the area of parent education is an adequate communication system between the delivery agent and the parent. Based on the

results of the mail survey, programs and services for parents are reported to exist. No attempt was made to check the accuracy of the survey data. It is possible that these programs and services are not fully developed or they are not operational at the present time, and thus parents have concluded that they do not exist. There may not be a need to develop elaborate and expensive parent programs and services. An effective advertising campaign by school districts, for example, may help parents meet many of their expressed needs.

These data suggest that programs and services do exist for parents of exceptional children. What is lacking, however, is a system for informing parents about what is available. Administrators may have done a poor job selling their programs. On the other hand, parents may not have been listening. Previous negative experiences may have made the parents suspicious of any special program being offered to meet their needs.

On the basis of data collected, the following recommendations are made:

1. Agencies, facilities and school programs serving exceptional persons should be aware that the programs they offer parents are not well publicized. Pamphlets and brochures should be developed and disseminated on a local basis to promote the programs and services that are available. The Community Resource Handbook developed from data collected in this study might be a means to solve the publicity problem.
2. Parents should be more involved in the planning and carrying out of programs and services for parents. Each school district, for example, might select a parent advisory board, whose function would be to assist in the coordination of the programs and services. One of the

most effective advertising techniques would be "parent telling parent."

3. Local information centers for parents of exceptional children should be developed. The center could be housed at a county school office. The function of the center would be to answer parents' questions, make referrals to outside agencies, assist in crisis situations, counsel parents, and to disseminate information about new developments in the field. The center could be staffed by parent volunteers.

Parents should be encouraged to be more involved in the planning and carrying out of parent education programs. In the past, their role has been that of a recipient of services. To help meet their expressed needs, parents will need to be active participants in their own education. Administrators of programs for parents should actively seek the cooperation of parents by listening to what they want and then encouraging them to help in the implementation of programs and services. Development of a system to publicize what is available to parents, as well as the development of a process to involve parents in parent education are the initial steps toward meeting the needs of parents of exceptional individuals.

References

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EXCEPTIONAL PARENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES QUESTIONNAIRE

School No. _____
School District No. _____
Organization/Agency No. _____

Title of Person Responding _____

Please answer each question as it applies to your parent education or parent services program presently. Parent "program" or "service" refers to assistance that you might provide for parents of exceptional individuals, which includes, among others, counseling, lectures, workshops, home visits, and reading materials. Feel free to write any additional comments on the back. Please include any relevant materials or pamphlets which describe your program or service. We have assigned a number to each respondent to insure anonymity. Thank you.

_____

1. **Do you currently have parent programs or services for parents of these types of individuals served by special education? (Circle yes or no)**

Educable Mentally Retarded	Yes	No
Trainable Mentally Retarded	Yes	No
Educationally Handicapped (Emotionally Disturbed and Learning Disabled)	Yes	No
Physically Disabled (Cerebral Palsied)	Yes	No
Visually Handicapped	Yes	No
Deaf, Deaf-Blind	Yes	No
Hard of Hearing	Yes	No
Speech Impaired	Yes	No
Severely Emotionally Disturbed	Yes	No

What is the age range of the individuals you serve? (Circle yes or no)

Preschool (0-4)	Yes	No
School-age (5-21)	Yes	No
Post School (over 21)	Yes	No

***If you have no programs or services for parents, please skip to question number 16.**

2. **If yes to any of the above, briefly describe the program or service on the back of this questionnaire.**

3. **Are programs or services distinct for categories above or are they combined? Please list those that are *combined* together and those that are *distinct*.**

Combined	**Distinct**
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Are programs or services distinct for each age group? Yes No
If so, please explain where applicable.

4. Who administers these programs or services? _____

_____

5. Approximate number of parents now involved in your parent program or receiving services?

_____

6. Approximate number of staff or volunteers involved in your program or service (full and part time). _____

7. If you do have a "regular" program of meetings, workshops, etc., how often do these occur?

_____

8. Where do these meetings, workshops, etc. take place?

_____

_____

9. Who conducts these meetings? (Circle yes or no)

Special education teachers	Yes	No
School psychologist	Yes	No
Counselors	Yes	No
Administrators	Yes	No
Medical Doctors	Yes	No
Parents	Yes	No

Other _____

_____

10. What is the content of these meetings? (Circle yes or no)

Films	Yes	No
Guest speakers, lecturers	Yes	No
Encounter groups, rap sessions or counseling	Yes	No
Demonstrations of techniques	Yes	No

Other _____

_____

11. **What are some of the services you offer parents on a more *individual* or small group basis?**

Counseling	Yes	No
Home visits	Yes	No
Referral help	Yes	No

Other _____

_____

_____

12. **Who provides these services?**

Special education teachers	Yes	No
School psychologist	Yes	No
Counselors	Yes	No
Administrators	Yes	No
Medical doctors	Yes	No
Parents	Yes	No

Other _____

_____

13. **In what ways do you feel your program or service is effective?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. **What type of feedback have you received from parents regarding your program or service?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. What other types of programs or services do you feel would be helpful to these parents?

16. ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED *NO* TO NO. 1.
What are the chances of developing programs for parents of exceptional individuals in the near future?

17. FOR *SCHOOLS* AND *SCHOOL DISTRICTS* ONLY.
What programs or services *will* you be providing parents under the new California Master Plan for Special Education? Please describe briefly.

QUESTIONS No. 18, No. 19, No. 20 FOR *ORGANIZATIONS* AND *AGENCIES* ONLY.

18. What is your funding source?

19. What types of programs or services do you offer the exceptional individuals? Briefly describe.

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. How are the parents and exceptional individuals you serve referred to your organization or agency?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Background Information 1

ID # _____

Data on Child

Date of birth: _____

Sex: _____

Birth order: _____

Language(s) spoken in home: _____

Child's ability to speak and understand them: _____

_____

Names and ages of other children living at home:

Name	Birthdate	Relationship
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Data on Parents or Others as indicated

Age bracket:	Mother	Father	Others (Please specify)
Under 20 years	_____	_____	_____
21-30 years	_____	_____	_____
31-40 years	_____	_____	_____
41-50 years	_____	_____	_____
Over 50 years	_____	_____	_____

Education: Last year of school completed

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Others: _____

Present occupation of

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Other: _____
(please specify)

Data on Family Structure

Special education child living with:

	Yes	No
Both parents	_____	_____
Mother only	_____	_____
Father only	_____	_____
Other (please specify)	_____	_____

Marital status of parents:

Married _____

Divorced _____

Separated _____

Widowed _____

Single Parent _____

Does child have other brothers or sisters in special education?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please describe: _____

_____

Needs Assessment 1

Name _____ ID # _____

Respondent to Interview: Mother ____ Father ____ Others: _____

Interviewer _____

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

1. What are some of the strong points of the school system?

2. What specific responsibilities do you feel the school system should assume?

3. Are the child's needs being met within the school system?

4. Have the student's school experiences been pleasant/unpleasant? Elaborate. How does he get along with other children? Does he have any difficulty with studies? Is he absent a great deal?

5. What are some of your concerns about the school program?

6. Are you aware of any services or programs offered by your child's school for parents of special education children? Yes _____ No _____

7. If yes, what are these? Which ones do you use? If you don't use them, why not?

8. Are these services or programs helpful? Yes _____ No _____
Please explain.

9. What additional services or programs do you think need to be offered by the school or school district for parents? (i.e., parent counseling, workshops, etc.)

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTSIDE AGENCIES

1. Do you obtain services in addition to those provided by the school for your child? Please describe.

2. Why do you use these services?

3. How did you learn about these services?

4. Do you pay for these services? Yes _____ No._____

5. Are you aware of any services or programs offered by the above agency or agencies for parents of special education children? Yes _____ No _____

6. If yes, what are these? Which ones do you use?

7. Are these services or programs helpful? Please explain.

8. What additional services or programs do you think are needed for parents?

INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD

1. What specific problems does your child have?

2. Do you think your child is getting help in these areas?

3. Do you need more information about your child's problems and more direction on what you could do at home with the child? If yes, explain?

4. How would you like to obtain this information?

Books _____

Magazines _____

Films _____

Lectures _____

Conferences _____

Counseling _____

Home visits _____

Workshops _____

If others, specify _____

_____

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARENT

1. Do you belong to any parent groups? If yes, what parent groups do you belong to?

2. Do you do volunteer work, or work in the school or are involved in any outside activities with exceptional children?

3. Have you found any reading materials helpful to you in terms of understanding your child and his problems? Is it of any value?

4. Have you heard of or are you aware of the magazine called Exceptional Parent? If yes, do you subscribe to it?

5. What ways have you found that are helpful in obtaining information about your child's problem?

6. Is the information you receive helpful to you and to your child?

7. If you have a question or concern about your child's problem, what is the first thing you usually do to answer the question?

8. Is the media helpful?

Newspaper _____

TV _____

Radio _____

Magazines _____

Movies _____

9. Looking into the future, what do you think may be some of your concerns and problems in relation to your special education child?

10. What is your greatest need in regard to special education child?

11. If it was possible to develop and offer a program designed to help parents of exceptional children, what would you hope would be included in this program? If such a program were developed, would you participate?

12. Additional Comments: